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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Shades of Katrina, it's hurricane season again already. And with that news, we're headed for torrential downpours this week (and weekend). Gee, didn't we just go through this weather pattern?! With the recent heat we've had the past week, we can use the rain. But, only if the totals keep the rivers below flood stage!

I hope that everyone had an enjoyable long Memorial Day weekend. I know, it is only celebrated in the U.S., but I can't help that one. It's a time to start the summer (unofficially), but more importantly, to remember our fallen soldiers. My wife and I got a lot done over the weekend. The pool is open, and without much anticipated problems. My vegetables are planted, as are all of my flowers (at least for now). I've started laying down more loam and mulch, but it's been so humid that I've tired quickly - it's going to be a slow process!

I've been trying to cut some expenses around here lately to help conserve some money. For many years, I've had multiple phone lines because I used to run a BBS, as well as have a dedicated internet line (I hated tying up the house line). Well, with our upgrading our cell phone services, I cut out long distance service on the house line, as well as finally getting the other two lines disconnected. We then ordered DSL service to speed up things during our internet use. We ordered Verizon DSL, and what a mess! We got everything from Verizon, but had to wait for them to hook us up externally. When they completed that, they somehow knocked out our phone service! That took a couple of days to resolve. Then we attempted to install the DSL hardware and software inside the house. Notice that I said attempted! We hooked up all of the phone filters, and double-checked to make sure that we did everything as explained in the instructions. We then hooked up the modem - we had to use my wife's machine when we discovered that mine didn't have an ethernet card inside. Okay, so everything got installed fine, and the software was now testing our DSL connection, and kept failing. We checked, and re-checked all of our connections. We undid everything, and started over again. Same result - no connection. We called tech support - twice. The first call ended up with our being told that we had done something wrong, to re-check everything. We did everything over again, again (nothing changed!). Still nothing. We called a second time the next day and was told that there was no DSL signal...on their end! The clue was the modem's DSL signal was flashing, and the tech person also could not detect a good signal. Someone would be dispatched to the site, the next day. We were guaranteed that this would be resolved within 48 hours. Two days later, my wife called me from work and asked if everything was all set. Nope. Later that evening, the service tech called and said that things "appeared" okay, but he was still seeing "stuff" that he didn't

like, so he was still working on it. Got another call a few hours later and was told all was well. So, we went through the software installation all over again. We were progressing further than before, and then the software locked up! Started all over again, and this time we were successful. We tested out my wife's system and it seemed like things were faster. But, it was late, so we decided to try again the next day. Meanwhile, I wanted to get my system up and running at DSL speeds! Nothing. When the tech support folks called the next day to let us know all was well, I asked what I needed to get my system up to speed (pun intended!). When he learned that I didn't have an ethernet card in my system, that was what I needed to get. So, I went out to our local electronics store, and got a card. I haven't installed it yet, trying to get some more work done outside before the rains began. I'm hoping that by the time you read this, I'll be running at supersonic speeds.

So, what's the point of all this? Well, I was hoping to somehow do an analogy of using our Atari machines - remembering what it was like to go from speeds like 1200 baud to 19,200 baud, and comparing dial-up speeds on a PC to the faster speeds of broadband. I thought that it would be fun, especially remembering the days of 1200 and slowly moving to ultra-high speeds at 19,200! I'll try to have that little story soon.

Until next time...

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#### TeraDesk 3.82 Released

Version 3.82 of TeraDesk open-source desktop is available at:

<http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm>

Functionality of some features was improved, several bugs were fixed and the hypertext manual updated.

See the history file for more information.

Have fun.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, we've finally gotten some non-liquid weather here in the northeast. I'll talk a little more about that in a minute, but first I want to apologize for not having a column in last week's issue.

It seems that the UseNet posts are getting thinner and thinner, and there are more and more times when there just isn't enough 'meat' to make a decent column. But rest assured; as long as there's someone out there who wants to sit down with this magazine and this column, I'll be here.

Okay, now on to 'that weather thing'...

You may have noticed that I've been talking about the weather more and more lately. Well, that's for two reasons.

First, my other favorite subject... politics... just doesn't fit into a computer-related column no matter how much I try. Besides, you already know what YOU think about things, right? You don't really need me to point things out to you. Oh sure, I could point things out and endlessly jab at the soft, white underbelly of the establishment, but if you're not inclined to do likewise already, my feeble intellect isn't going to sway you.

Second, the weather is getting stranger and stranger all the time. We're expecting more and stronger hurricanes this season, the moisture pendulum is swinging from too wet to too dry too often and too fast, and we still waste our time arguing about whether it's a natural phenomenon or not. Whether it is or not, wouldn't it make sense to try to keep things in check a little bit? Do we really want to argue about whether or not we're changing the climate ourselves, or whether it's a "nature thing" while temperatures rise, glaciers shrink and deserts expand? Think about the "great trans-Kansas dustbowl and growing cotton and sugar cane in Anchorage. At that point, will it matter if it's a natural cycle or if fossil fuel exhaust caused it?

The President was wrong, by the way... we're not addicted to oil. We're addicted to ENERGY. Whether it be nuclear, fossil fuel, solar, wind, wave or squirrel cage, we crave energy.

Like many of you, I'm not old enough to remember the way things were during World War II, but I'm old enough to remember gas lines and alternate-day rationing from the late 70's.

Remember the craze we all went through for fuel-efficient cars? Car pooling? Consolidating trips to stores? Turning the thermostat down and donning a sweater? Any of this ringing a bell?

We don't seem to want to do that anymore. Of course, the oil companies know this, and have done a very good job of keeping the supply lines open so that we don't get the idea that conservation would be a good thing. Hell, it didn't fix the problem back in the 70's, did it?

What we need right now is a reason to conserve, a reason to think about what we're doing instead of just resigning ourselves to paying a little bit more.

Notice how I said all of that without pointing fingers at anyone in particular? Even with that part about the oil companies, I wasn't really pointing a finger. They're simply doing what they can to keep things on an even keel and keep their profits rolling in. Whether or not it's their prime consideration, wild fluctuations in

the supply of fuel would cause a sort of society-wide wave... perhaps even an economic tsunami that would sweep in, swamping everything, and then retreat from whence it had come, sucking most of the more subtle and delicate things in its path with it.

Well, I'm going to bring the sermon to a close now, but the next time you top off the tank, leave the computer running 24/7, leave the lights on so that passers-by don't know that you're not home, or run the dishwasher for a couple of plates and a set of flatware, think about saving a couple of pints of oil or gasoline, a couple of cubic feet of natural gas, a shovel full of coal or a thimble full of plutonium pellets. This is step one, so you don't even need to feel that you MUST change your habits. As with many of the problems that we face, all you need to do is THINK. If you do that often enough and well enough, a solution will often present itself.

Well, let's get to the news, hint, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'Cyril' asks for help with his NovaScan:

"With N.AES 2.0, I have a problem with Novascan. Black and white scanning is ok, but grey and colour scans don't work correctly. I get a strange image. With MagiC and MyAeS, it's ok. Any ideas?"

Martin Tarenskeen asks Cyril:

"If you prefer MiNT instead of Magic; have you tried a recent FreeMiNT 1.16.x with XaAES kernel module? I think in the current state XaAES has surpassed N.AES 2.0."

Everyone's favorite techie, Alison, asks about SCSI drives:

"What is the arrangement with SCSI hard drives and the Atari ST? I've just acquired an ICD LINK adapter and am trawling the web at the moment for lowish GB SCSI1 50-pin drives.

The Seagates seem to come out top as there's specifically a 'parity' jumper on them.

Can 68pin or 80pin drives be used with an adapter, or does the 16bit transfers create an issue?

Would it be possible for someone to give me an idea of what I'm looking for? As trawling eBay at the moment I can pick up plenty of these Compaq ultrawide drive pulls, assuming they have a SCSI1 mode and can perform 8 bit transfers.

The ICD Link btw will recognize my SCSI Cumana (was for Acorn BBC Archimedes) drive, so is assumed to be functional."

David Wade tells Alison:

"I am not sure of the Link supports SCSI command passthrough. If it does then almost any SCSI drive should work. However I suggest that you get a copy of HD-Driver. I have a TT-030 which has a built in SCSI adaptor. I have a pile of (8 I think) 1 and 2Gbyte SCSI drives next to it. I also have copies of several version of AHDI, CBHD and HD Driver. All the SCSI disks in the pile work on a PC with an Adaptec SCSI adaptor.

However on my TT only HD Driver works correctly with most of the drives. AHDI almost always sees the drive, and appears to format them.. But it won't ever create a partition. CBHD sometimes creates a partition but then manages to corrupt the data. After all this messing around I began to think my TT was duff. However I managed to create a partition with CBHD and the demo version of HD Driver then accessed this flawlessly. So I bought a copy of HD Driver and all seems great. I must admit I don't use the thing very often these days....

Would you like some samples from my pile of SCSI drives. If you want I'll format a couple up with HD Driver (but not install the driver) so you may then be able to access it with the demo version..."

Alison tells David:

"Definitely wouldn't say no to some SCSI drives to play with :) Ideally like to start small and with 50-pin. Name your price!"

The last word on hard drives, Dr. Uwe Seimet, adds:

"HDX is known for often reporting that it could not write the root sector, and in this case it is impossible to create a partition. But even if AHDI were able to partition a drive one would not have much fun with drives bigger than 1 GB because AHDI cannot access more than the first GB of a SCSI drive. AHDI does not know/use the SCSI commands required for accessing sectors beyond the first GB.

Note that formatting a drive is never required if a drive does not have bad sectors. Depending on the drive formatting can take a long time. Partitioning a drive is always sufficient, even if it was previously used with another platform, because partitioning creates new filesystems and simply overwrites any old stuff."

Alan Hourihane adds his experiences:

"I've successfully used a SCA 80pin to 50 pin adapter with my Atari TT030 and a Seagate ST34572WC drive. A couple of others didn't even get recognized, like a Quantum & DEC. I've also used an IBM DCHS drive too."

Ivan Capan asks about using floppy images on the ST:

"I have lots of files on the PC with a .ST extension and I want to transfer them to floppies. Is there a way to put the floppy in Atari, which is connected with PC in some way (I have a null-modem cable), and use some program to write the image byte by byte to

And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Survey: Nintendo's Wii Expected To Be Blockbuster

Nintendo's forthcoming next-generation console, the Wii, is already sparking a craze among consumers, according to a new survey that suggests the Wii could be the next blockbuster hit in the gaming world.

Japanese video game magazine Famitsu, which conducted the survey, found that 68.8 percent of respondents are looking forward to the Wii in contrast to only 21 percent awaiting the PlayStation 3.

The report also indicated that 88.4 percent of respondents said the PlayStation 3 was priced too high, while only 10.9 percent thought the price was about right.

Last week, Nintendo formally revealed that it will be pricing the Wii at \$250 even though its competitors are pricing their next-gen systems at much higher levels.

Microsoft's Xbox 360, released last November, is priced at \$400, while Sony's forthcoming PlayStation 3 is set at \$499.

Although the exact launch date has not been set for the Wii, Nintendo said it plans to ship six million of the systems between when it launches later this year and the end of March 2007.

In addition, the company is expecting to sell some 17 million Wii games in the same period.

"When consoles first come out, the price is at its peak," said Michael Gartenberg, an analyst at Jupiter Research. "You can always lower the price, but you can't raise it. It's part of the strategy."

Early adopters tend to pay a higher price, he said, pointing out that to be a leader in video games, it takes more than low prices. A lot comes down to the game titles, he said, such as what titles are offered and what's available for the holiday season.

"It'll be interesting to see how it all plays out," he noted.

Nintendo Wii Wins Top Video Game Critics' Award

Video game critics on Wednesday honoured Nintendo's Wii console and Electronic Arts' upcoming "Spore" video game for bringing fresh ideas to

the \$28.5 billion (15 billion pounds) industry that has been criticized for relying on films for inspiration and on game sequels for sales.

Critics crowned the Wii "Best of Show" after game enthusiasts at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) waited hours to get their hands on the Nintendo Co. Ltd. machine due later this year. They raved about how its new controller allowed them to play sports games like tennis and football much in the same way they are played in real life.

"It's a great story and it's something different," said Geoff Keighley, co-chairman of the Game Critics Awards, an independent group of journalists from 37 North American media outlets that cover the video game industry.

"It proves that you don't necessarily have to spend \$20 billion on a big blockbuster game to stay competitive and get attention," he said, referring to the rapidly rising cost of developing games for Sony Corp.'s upcoming PlayStation 3 and Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360.

Creating games for the Wii is expected to be far less expensive than for the PS3 and Xbox 360, super-charged machines that boast eye-popping graphics capabilities and cost about twice as much as Nintendo's upcoming console.

Wii also won for "Best Hardware" and Nintendo's "Wii Sports" title took home the prize for "Best Sports Game."

EA's "Spore" - last year's "Best of Show" winner - won "Best Original Game," "Best PC Game" and "Best Simulation Game."

"Spore" is the brainchild of "The Sims" creator Will Wright. The game promises to let players take a creature from its cellular beginnings all the way through to missions of interstellar conquest.

Other winners include Epic Games and Microsoft Game Studios' "Gears of War" and Ubisoft's "Assassin's Creed."

Keighley called the new pool of ideas a good sign for the industry, which has begun to show signs of fatigue as its audience tires of sequels and film-inspired games.

"It shows that this industry can create great ideas that are also great games. It's also great to see that publishers are willing to bet big with original property," Keighley said.

The PS3: More Than A Game

If Sony suffers any more missteps in bringing its PlayStation 3 video game console to market, its entire consumer electronics business strategy could be in jeopardy.

Now delayed until mid-November, the PS3 is more than just the next generation of game machine for the \$26.6-billion-a-year video game industry that Sony dominates. It's also the centerpiece of Sony's (Research) plan to own the global standards for high-definition video and consumer-data storage and to create a common microprocessor platform that will enable Sony products to share music, video, and data seamlessly, thus becoming the master controller of the digital ecosystem.

Sony slept through the dawn of digital media. Now a Welsh-born American former media executive is charged with overhauling the company that once symbolized the rise of postwar Japan. Can Sir Howard Stringer and his polyglot crew wake the company up?

November launch might disappoint some, but it could be just what the system needs.

Analysts, developers say they expect Sony's new console to break new price barriers.

But the Blu-ray Disc high-definition DVD player and the Cell microprocessor, the heart and brain of the PS3, are expensive to make, forcing Sony not just to delay the PS3 to the brink of the 2006 holiday season but also to price the basic and enhanced PS3 consoles at \$499 and \$599, respectively, much higher than any previous game machines and at least \$200 above their next-generation rivals, Microsoft's (Research) Xbox 360 and Nintendo's Wii.

Analysts at Merrill Lynch calculate that the Cell microprocessor costs \$230 to make, and the Blu-ray optical drive about \$350. Along with a hard drive, memory chips, and other costs, Merrill Lynch says, Sony's bill of goods for each PS3 could be more than \$715.

If those numbers are correct - Sony declines to comment - and if Sony hits its target of shipping four million PS3s by the end of the year, Sony could lose close to \$1 billion this year on the hardware alone, adding to huge costs for PS3 development and marketing.

Despite the losses, Sony could win big by populating the world with millions of Blu-ray high-definition DVD players, tipping the advantage to Sony in the battle to establish Blu-ray as the global standard for next-generation DVD systems, over the rival HD-DVD format supported by Toshiba and Microsoft.

Microsoft executives are gleeful at Sony's delays and high pricing for the PS3. Bill Gates says his company will have sold ten million Xbox 360 systems by the time the PS3 and Nintendo's Wii reach store shelves.

Conceding that the PS3 is "very expensive," Ken Kutaragi, head of Sony's games business, told a Japanese Web site earlier this year that he expects "consumers to think to themselves, 'I will work more hours to buy one.' We want people to feel that they want it, irrespective of anything else."

He has also said the PS3 is "not a game machine." Rather, he says, it is a "machine with supercomputer calculation capabilities for home entertainment."

If Kutaragi-san's calculations are wrong, the big game could be over. If he's right, Sony could once again become the world's dominant consumer electronics giant.

For Immediate Release

America's Videogame Expo Forms Advisory Board

VGXPO forms "Dream Team"

PHILADELPHIA, PA - June 2, 2006. America's VideoGame Expo (VGXPO) Thursday announced the formation of its advisory board. The board was created to steward the evolution of VGXPO and help it become the premier event for videogame consumers. Comprised of experts in videogame development, marketing communications, and journalism, Ed Fleming, Director of the VGXPO, named eight industry luminaries as charter members:

- # Bill Rehbock - Director Developer Relations, Nvidia
- # David Perry - Founder Shiny Entertainment; Founder GameConsultants.COM
- # Howard Phillips - Design Manager, Microsoft
- # Jamil Moledina - Executive Director, Game Developers Conference
- # Jo Clowes - Producer, Microsoft Games Studios
- # Joseph Olin - President, Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences
- # Bill Kunkel (a.k.a. The Game Doctor) - Co-Founder, Electronic Games; Game Designer; College Professor
- # Tommy Tallarico - Co-producer Judgment Day and The Electric Playground; Founder of Video Games Live, Founder; President of the Game Audio Network Guild

To move VGXPO to the forefront of the gaming industry Fleming assembled a strong team of industry leaders and visionaries. "These folks are at the top of their game and this advisory board is America's VideoGame Expo's 'Dream Team'," stated Fleming. "The key asset each of these people brings to VGXPO is their love of videogames and belief that game players should have an industry event dedicated to them."

The mission of the Advisory Board includes three core areas:

- # Provide evangelism to the game industry for a consumer-oriented videogame convention.
- # Develop avenues to publicly honor game industry stars, icons and legends. Including selecting Life Time Achievement Award recipients and inductees in the VideoGame Hall of Fame.
- # Define the overall scope and direction of future VGXPO events.

"It is so important for our industry to have events which help to preserve our history and promote the amazing community of fans," said Tommy Tallarico, founder of VideoGames Live. "VGXPO does both successfully and I look forward to helping it grow even bigger over the next few years."

"Imagine a videogame expo that examines the industry from the perspectives of the past, present and future. Now think about getting a chance to meet and greet the largely mysterious creators who shape these games. Toss in hundreds of arcade, PC and home game systems, and areas devoted to every aspect of the videogame universe. Sound like fun? Then I'll see you there," said game industry veteran Bill Kunkel. "If America is going to get the open-to-the-public national videogame expo it deserves, this is the organization and these are the people who will do it."

"Most popular forms of entertainment, be they films, comic books, or TV shows, have conventions for fan communities to gather and meet with each other and some of the creators of their passion," said Jamil Moledina, executive director of the Game Developers Conference. "Videogame fans deserve this access too, and VGXPO delivers that experience for them -- and fills a critical gap in modern popular culture."

For more information regarding America's VideoGame Expo, visit us on the web at www.VGXPO.com

America's VideoGame Expo, based in Philadelphia, is part of Lunar Tide Communications, Inc. a company that develops videogame related events and educational services. It's core service, the VideoGame.Net Experience, is an educational program that teaches students in 6th through 12th grades videogame design and production. Since 2003, the VideoGame.Net Experience curriculum has been taught to over 1000 students.

Now in its second year, America's VideoGame Expo was created to provide US game players with conventions on par with similar international game events, such as the Tokyo Game Show, Korea's G-Star convention and the German G|C expo. In 2005, VGXPO attracted 17,000 attendees and over 40 exhibitors. For 2006, VGXPO will take place, October 27-29, at the Valley Forge Convention Center, in Philadelphia, PA.

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America's VideoGame Expo Logo Available:

<http://www.vgxpo.com/images/vgxpolo.jpg> (72 dpi)

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Rumored To Be Planning eBay Buyout

The latest rumor to sweep the world of high tech claims that Microsoft has its eyes on eBay for a possible buyout. Last week, a report in the New York Post said that Microsoft has engaged in preliminary talks with eBay about acquiring the online auction company and merging it with MSN.

Microsoft and eBay declined to comment. "The information out in the public is speculation and the company does not comment on rumors," said an eBay spokesperson. A spokesperson for Microsoft said much the same thing.

But bloggers, industry analysts, and others have been speculating about what a move on Microsoft's part might mean.

"[Microsoft] can either improve MSN to make it more of a real competitor to Google, or it can take a different approach, for example by buying eBay," said Martin Reynolds, an analyst at Gartner. "Google is quietly creeping up on Microsoft, and eBay would take Microsoft in a whole new direction."

Reynolds also said that eBay's acquisition of Internet telephony firm Skype

last year would be an added bonus for Microsoft. "But buying eBay would be an expensive acquisition for Microsoft," he warned.

Stacey Quandt, an analyst at Aberdeen Group, agreed with Reynolds that acquiring eBay would transform Microsoft.

"If Microsoft purchases eBay, it would certainly invigorate MSN and create a stronger community due to the growing use of Skype and PayPal," she said. "A dramatic gesture of this sort is needed to achieve the promise of MSN to be a leading content- and services-delivery model."

Avivah Litan, an analyst at Gartner, warned of the possible downside. "I can understand MSN's motivation in potentially acquiring eBay, but it would be a major negative for eBay shareholder value," she said.

"Microsoft has no expertise in actual commerce and transactions, and there is no natural synergy between the two companies other than that they both have a major Internet presence," she said. "Surely, there are less painful ways to improve the stakes for MSN."

The eBay-Microsoft merger rumors follow last week's announcement that eBay has agreed to a wide-ranging partnership with Yahoo. Under the terms of that deal, Yahoo will become the exclusive provider of all graphical advertisements on eBay, and will deliver sponsored search listings for products on some eBay pages.

At the same time, Yahoo is putting eBay's PayPal platform in its online-wallet system so customers can pay for the Web portal's services through their PayPal accounts.

Windows Live OneCare Hits the Streets

On Wednesday, Microsoft launched a new security service called Windows Live OneCare. Likening the service to a "pit crew" for consumer PCs, Microsoft said the software will fend off malicious attacks with antivirus and antispyware capabilities, plus a personal firewall.

Windows Live OneCare is designed to circumvent what for many consumers is a frustrating and confusing experience as they attempt to protect their PCs from the constant threat of viruses and spyware. Going one step further than security, the service also is designed to simplify basic PC-maintenance functions, like backing up files, that many users typically forego.

"Windows Live OneCare delivers what millions of consumers have been asking for: one source for top-to-bottom maintenance, support, and performance optimization tools plus increased protection that takes the worry out of PC care," said Bill Gates, Microsoft chairman and chief software architect, in a statement announcing the new offering.

Windows Live OneCare, which has been in its testing phase since November, includes several tune-up applications in addition to the security software. So-called janitorial tasks, such as disk cleanup and disk optimization, are performed automatically according to a user-configurable schedule.

In addition, the service provides users with the ability to monitor PC startup times. Slow boot-up times can indicate a potential performance

problem, which OneCare is designed to fix. In addition, OneCare allows users to back up system information and other data onto CDs, DVDs, or external hard drives at preset intervals.

The OneCare service is currently available for download at <http://onecare.live.com> and will debut as a boxed offering at retailers on June 4. The software costs \$49.95 for an annual subscription that can be applied to three computers simultaneously.

According to Andrew Jaquith, an analyst at Yankee Group, OneCare's primary significance is that it signals Microsoft's intent to become a serious player in consumer security software.

The OneCare launch came on the same day that security firm McAfee announced Falcon, a OneCare-like offering that the company intends to ship this year. In addition, Symantec is readying its own all-in-one security offering, called Norton 360, that will compete with both OneCare and Falcon.

"OneCare, McAfee Falcon, and Symantec 360 are all aiming at the sweet spot of antispyware, antivirus, and threat management," Jaquith explained.

That McAfee and Symantec are also launching their own all-in-one security services indicates that they see Microsoft as a real threat, said Rob Ayoub, an analyst at Frost & Sullivan. Because all three services will offer very similar features, Ayoub said, the deciding factor for consumers will come down to personal preference and how well the services are marketed.

The benefit from all this security activity, Ayoub said, is that average computer users will have a better chance of protecting their computers.

"Any time you see a new wave of innovation like we're seeing with these products, that's good for consumers," Jaquith said.

Google Has No Plan for Its Own Web Browser

Google Inc. has no plans to build its own Web browser software to compete with rival Microsoft Corp., Chief Executive Eric Schmidt said on Wednesday.

During a conference call with Wall Street analysts, Schmidt dismissed speculation that the company aimed to tie together its Web search and other services to compete with Microsoft's Internet Explorer, the world's dominant Web browser.

"It looks like people have some good browser choices already," Schmidt said. "We would not build a browser for the fun of building a browser," he added.

Google encourages its customers to use a variety of alternatives to Internet Explorer, particularly the open-source Firefox browser.

It also has partnerships to encourage the use of the Safari browser among Apple Computer Inc. customers, Norway's Opera Software ASA, which makes browsers for computers and phones, among several other browser alternatives, he said.

However, Schmidt left the door open to developing a browser if it saw some

clear utility to users that was not otherwise being met in the market. "We would only do something ... if we thought there was a real end-user benefit," he said.

The Google executive has consistently downplayed questions about its ambitions to develop its own browser software by saying that the underlying assumption is that Google is taking up the battle that Web browser pioneer Netscape Communications Corp. lost to Microsoft during the 1990s.

Schmidt argues that the landscape of the computer industry has been changed by the dynamics of Web search advertising and the decade-old "battle for the desktop" waged by Microsoft and its competitors is quickly becoming less relevant.

Vista Will Have Its Own Internet Explorer 7

At Microsoft these days, it seems that everything that was old is new again in Windows Vista. The software giant has added Internet Explorer 7 to the list of programs that will get a complete Vista makeover.

Christened IE7+, the new version of the Web browser boasts added security features not available in the current version currently in beta testing.

Microsoft's Tony Schreiner announced the new version of the IE browser on the company's Internet Explorer blog.

While all current versions of IE are basically the same, IE7+ is enhanced with the addition of Windows Vista-only features such as a protected mode, new parental controls, and improved network diagnostics, Schreiner wrote.

"Features like IE7 protected mode, which runs IE in low rights, are doable because of features that are part of Windows Vista," said Michael Silver, an analyst at Gartner. "We think the User Account Control in general, including protected mode in IE7+, will be one of the most compelling features of Windows Vista for enterprises."

With the extensive parental-control features, adults will be able to limit and monitor a child's access to the Internet. Parents will be able to prohibit access to certain Internet sites and control which applications the child can use.

Parents also will have access to a detailed report that shows exactly what Web sites the child visited and the applications used.

The Microsoft team wound up with the IE7+ name because the "naming gives us an easy way to refer to this version, Schreiner wrote. "'The version of IE7 in Vista' doesn't roll off the tongue as easily."

If nothing else, said Silver, the name "IE7+" really makes the point that the version of Internet Explorer 7 in Vista is different than the version in XP.

Nitin Gupta, an analyst at Yankee Group, said that although it is understandable that Microsoft would not be able to make the XP version of Internet Explorer 7 as secure as the Vista version, the company needs to be extremely careful with how it communicates the difference to users.

"Most Internet users do not proactively switch browsers," Gupta said. "For the group of Internet users that do, security concerns are an important driver."

Dell Debuts XPS Computers for Gaming, Entertainment

Dell Inc. on Wednesday rolled out three new personal computers aimed at consumers who are willing to pay a premium for machines they use to play games, music and video.

Alex Gruzen, senior vice president of Dell Product Group, said the XPS M1210, XPS M2010 and XPS 700 are aimed at "a more discerning, premium customer."

The move comes as the No. 1 PC maker is looking for ways to boost profits as competition drives down PC prices.

The XPS M1210 and M2010 are multimedia-ready laptops that further extend the company's video game-oriented XPS line into entertainment.

Dell has been expanding its selection of gaming PCs, which require more power and sophisticated graphics and can sell for five to 10 times as much as desktop PCs.

Wednesday marked the debut of the four-pound XPS M1210, a multimedia and gaming laptop, with a starting price of \$1,300.

The sleek XPS M2010, which was unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, has a 20-inch, high-definition wide-screen monitor, eight speakers and other features. It looks like an artists' portfolio when carried by its owner. Prices start at \$3,500.

Also available is the XPS 700, a desktop computer for video game enthusiasts. Prices range from \$2,300 to \$3,500 for out-of-the-box systems.

FBI Wants Internet Records Kept Two Years

The Federal Bureau of Investigation wants U.S. Internet providers to retain Web address records for up to two years to aid investigations into terrorism and pornography, a source familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

The request came during a May 26 meeting between U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and FBI Director Robert Mueller with top executives at companies like Google Inc., Microsoft Corp. and Time Warner Inc.'s AOL.

"I think there is less of a willingness to passively go along with this type of request than there might have been a year ago," said the source, mentioning the recent uproar over a report that telephone companies had provided call records to the National Security Agency.

A Justice Department spokesman confirmed the meeting but was not immediately available to comment on how long law enforcement officials wanted the records retained.

"This meeting was an initial discussion for the Attorney General to gather information and to solicit input from Internet service provider executives on the issues associated with data retention," said spokesman Brian Roehrkasse.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Gonzales presented blurred images of child pornography and explained why he thought retaining data was important to those investigations. At issue was Internet protocol addresses.

When one industry executive questioned how long the government wanted the records kept, Mueller said for two years and that the data would also be used for anti-terrorism purposes, said the source.

The Justice Department has tangled before with Internet companies over gaining access to records, subpoenaing search data from Google to defend an online pornography law. The government cut the size of its demand and Google acquiesced.

In that instance, Microsoft and Yahoo Inc. had turned over search information after receiving assurances that no specific customer data was involved.

The IP address is key to unlocking what a person does online, what site they visited what terms they searched, who they e-mailed and what they downloaded, the source noted. Internet providers usually change the address data within several days to several weeks.

Two big high-speed Internet service providers, Verizon Communications and Comcast Corp., also attended the meeting last week, the source said.

The Justice Department spokesman said Internet companies would retain the information and the government would only gain access to the records through legal means like a subpoena. "Internet service providers would retain the information," Roehrkasse said.

If Congress is going to be asked to pass legislation ordering Internet providers to retain data they won't be asked for content of that data but rather addresses e-mails were sent and sites they visited, Roehrkasse said.

Recommendations are expected to be submitted to Gonzales in the next several weeks, according to another source.

Data retention is a "complicated issue with implications not only for efforts to combat child pornography but also for security, privacy, safety, and availability of low-cost or free Internet services," said Microsoft senior security strategist Phil Reitering.

Google spokesman Steve Langdon said proposals by the United States and European Union on data retention "require careful review and must balance the legitimate interests of individual users, law enforcement agencies, and Internet companies."

The Justice Department's chief privacy officer on Thursday met with a group of officials from rights groups including the Electronic Privacy Information Center, the Center for American Progress, Cato Institute, the Center for Democracy and Technology, Roehrkasse said.

The American Civil Liberties Union was also invited but did not attend, he

said. Other Justice Department officials were meeting with victims rights groups and law enforcement groups to discuss the same issues.

World Media Chiefs Tell China To End Cyber Censorship

Global press leaders told China to stop Internet censorship and free all detained cyber-dissidents, and they slammed Western companies that helped it develop software that prevents Chinese citizens from accessing information on human rights and democracy.

They called on China "to end its pervasive censorship of the Internet, release all journalists and cyber-dissidents currently detained and remove all restrictions that discourage an open and free media environment in the country."

Members of the International Press Institute (IPI), a global body of editors, leading journalists and media executives, unanimously adopted the firm line at their annual general assembly in the Scottish capital Edinburgh.

China has the second-largest number of online users in the world after the United States, with more than 130 million Chinese accessing the Internet, said the institute dedicated to press freedom.

But as the web has grown in popularity, the Chinese authorities have maintained control over information.

"The Chinese government is working closely with Western companies eager to enter the lucrative Chinese technology market to develop software that prevents Chinese citizens from accessing information on human rights and democracy," the IPI resolution said.

"Those companies should not cooperate with censorship and should not supply information about users that can be used to prosecute journalists."

The IPI said that at least 30 people were in Chinese jails on freedom of expression charges.

These include Ching Cheong, a journalist with Singapore's Straits Times newspaper, who faces espionage charges, and New York Times researcher Zhao Yan.

"IPI members are convinced that progress in China is undermined by the state's cynical exploitation of Western technology, unnecessary legislation and encouragement of self-censorship," the resolution said.

Internet search engine Google raised eyebrows in January when it launched its new service for China, google.cn, after agreeing to censor websites and content banned by the nation's propaganda chiefs.

Delegates in Edinburgh heard Sunday that Google had the choice between delivering the vast majority of information that it could, in line with local laws, or not operating in China at all.

Google principle scientist Krishna Bharat said: "As an information provider, denying people information does not seem like a good choice."

The IPI's three-day congress brings together some 450 participants from 60-odd countries to debate burning issues for the world's press.

Apple Loses Court Bid To Identify Sources

A state appeals court on Friday rejected Apple Computer Inc.'s bid to identify the sources of leaked product information that appeared on Web sites, ruling that online reporters and bloggers are entitled to the same protections as traditional journalists.

"In no relevant respect do they appear to differ from a reporter or editor for a traditional business-oriented periodical who solicits or otherwise comes into possession of confidential internal information about a company," Justice Conrad Rushing of the 6th District Court of Appeal wrote in a unanimous 69-page ruling.

"We decline the implicit invitation to embroil ourselves in questions of what constitutes 'legitimate journalism,'" he wrote. "The shield law is intended to protect the gathering and dissemination of news, and that is what petitioners did here."

The online journalists are thus entitled to the protections provided under California's shield law as well as the privacy protections for e-mails allowed under federal law, the court ruled.

Two years ago, Apple went to court seeking to identify the culprits behind the leak of confidential information about an unreleased product code-named as "Asteroid" to online media outlets.

Apple contended it was entitled to identify the sources - presumed in this case to be company employees - because the leak constituted a violation of trade secrets. The Cupertino, Calif.-based company subpoenaed the Internet service providers of three online journalists to turn over e-mail records aiming to uncover the possible sources.

A lower court last year ruled in Apple's favor, but the Electronic Frontier Foundation, whose attorneys represent the online journalists of AppleInsider.com, PowerPage.org and MacNN.com appealed.

The appeals court based in San Jose sided with the civil liberties organization, overturning the lower court's decision. The three-member appellate panel agreed not only with the group's constitutional arguments but also the contention that Apple failed to exhaust other investigative options to root out the source before going to court and issuing subpoenas.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation called the ruling "a huge win."

"Today's decision is a victory for the rights of journalists, whether online or offline, and for the public at large," said the group's staff attorney Kurt Opsahl, who argued the case before the appeals court last month.

Password-Stealing Trojan Spreads

A fresh round of spam with a password-stealing Trojan horse detected this week uses a German-language pitch, saying the malicious attachment is an official Microsoft Windows update.

The attached malware, called "Trojan-PSW.Win32.Sinowal.u" by antivirus software developer Kaspersky Lab, is a next-generation Trojan that's on the rise, said Roel Schouwenberg, a senior research engineer with the company. The Sinowal family of malware was first detected in December, and first seeded on malicious Web sites.

If a user visited the site and did not have a properly patched browser, the software would install itself, allowing it to harvest login and password information for some European banks' Web sites, Schouwenberg said. The Sinowal family of malware may have been created in Russia, since the malware code contains some Russian, he said.

The latest spam messages have a ".de" e-mail address. Rather depending on a browser exploit to install itself, the latest version of Sinowal tries to trick users into installing it. The message, written in German, claims that a new worm is on the loose, and that the recipient should run the attached file to protect their system.

Schouwenberg said the malware writers may have decided to send it by mass e-mail if the browser exploit approach wasn't working as well.

The Sinowal Trojan is a type of "man-in-the-middle" malware. Even if a user has started a Secure Sockets Layer transaction with a bank, the Sinowal Trojan can insert HTML code that causes a pop-up window asking for a user name and password. It is programmed to react to certain bank Web sites.

"This is something we are going to see more and more and really make life hard," Schouwenberg said.

It's unique since it then sends that information immediately to the hacker's server rather than storing the information for periodic transmission, Schouwenberg said. The Trojan is also capable of checking for updates of itself.

Amnesty Seeks To End Internet Repression

Amnesty International marked its 45th anniversary on Sunday by launching a global campaign to stamp out state censorship of the Internet.

The human rights pressure group called on Web users to sign a pledge calling on governments to stop censoring sites and urging technology corporations not to collude with them.

Arguing that online censorship is a new threat to freedom, Amnesty claimed to have uncovered Internet repression in areas around the world from China and Tunisia to Vietnam, Iran, Israel and the Maldives.

Calling for the release of "cyber dissidents" jailed for expressing their political views online, Amnesty said Internet cafes are being shut down, computers seized, chat rooms monitored and blogs deleted.

"The Internet is a huge, powerful tool. We see governments censoring access to the Internet or locking people up for having conversations about

democracy and freedom," said Kate Allen, UK director of Amnesty International.

Launching a new irrepressible.info Web site to challenge Internet censorship, Allen said "I call on governments to stop the unwarranted restriction of freedom of expression and on companies to stop helping them do it."

The world's largest Internet providers have become embroiled in an international debate about Web censorship, especially in China.

Earlier this month, Yahoo Inc. said it was seeking the U.S. government's help in urging China to allow more media freedom after reports linking information it gave to Chinese authorities with the jailing of a dissident.

The case was the latest to highlight conflicts of profit and principle for Internet companies in the world's second biggest Internet market.

Web search leader Google Inc, has come under fire for saying it would block politically sensitive terms on its new China site, bowing to conditions set by Beijing.

The new campaign for freedom on the information superhighway was launched in the Observer newspaper. In 1961, an article by Peter Benenson in the same newspaper, calling on governments to stop persecution, led to Amnesty being founded.

Corporations accused of collusion were quick to defend themselves in the newspaper with Yahoo corporate communications manager Alex Laity telling The Observer: "We condemn punishment of any activity internationally recognised as free expression whether that punishment takes place in China or anywhere else in the world."

Amnesty, which once relied on letter writing campaigns to bombard governments with pleas to release political prisoners, now has 1.8 million supporters in more than 100 countries.

Adapting "People Power" to the electronic age as a tool for pressurising international opinion, Amnesty urged Web users to sign an online pledge which will be presented to a U.N. meeting on the future of the Internet in November.

Supreme Court Won't Consider Yahoo Case

The Supreme Court passed up a chance Tuesday to consider whether Yahoo Inc. could use American courts to resolve an overseas dispute over the Internet company's display of Nazi memorabilia.

A French judge had ordered the Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company to take Nazi paraphernalia off its site, yahoo.com. The judge proposed a fine of about \$15 million for running an auction site in which French users could buy and sell the memorabilia banned in France.

Yahoo's lawyers contested the decision in federal court in California, not France, arguing that it violated the company's constitutional free speech rights.

A U.S. appeals court dismissed the company's lawsuit earlier this year. But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals did not resolve whether U.S.-based Internet companies are liable for damages in foreign courts for displaying content that is unlawful overseas but protected in the United States.

Although Yahoo lost in that ruling, it did not appeal.

Instead, two French associations took the case to the Supreme Court, arguing that the ruling leaves the door open for Yahoo to try to use U.S. courts to avoid judgments by courts in other countries.

Yahoo, which was not forced to pay the fine, filed no arguments at the high court.

The case is *La Ligue Contre Le Racisme Et L'Antisemitisme, v. Yahoo! Inc.*, 05-1302.

Berners-Lee: Web Is Ready To Evolve

The mainstream Web is ready for the next step in its evolution, the father of the Internet proclaimed at this year's World Wide Web Conference (W3C).

"Twenty years from now, we'll look back and say this was the embryonic period," Tim Berners-Lee, the man credited with creating the Web, said last week during the opening of conference. "The Web is only going to get more revolutionary."

Supporters of what is called the "Semantic Web" predict an entirely new Internet that enables computers to do more of the heavy lifting in terms of processing data and being able to better interpret the information found on Web pages.

The Semantic Web is characterized by a greater focus on interactivity and customization, and an emphasis on media content and social technologies. In terms of e-commerce and other functionality, experts say, the Semantic Web will bear little resemblance to the current Internet.

The higher level of performance will be achieved, in part, by new technologies that move well beyond traditional keyword-search strategies.

As fleshed out at the conference, Berners-Lee's vision of the next-generation Internet is one in which Web sites, links, media content, and databases are "smarter," having the ability to automatically provide more meaning than what is available to users today.

The Semantic Web would make better sense of the glut of data on the Internet and give it context.

Using new programming languages, the technology would augment the Web with a "Semantic layer," explained Alex Linden, a former analyst at Gartner.

Linden explained that, for average Internet users, the technology initially will mean better searches. "Because of the additional data that can be processed better by computers, it will feed all kinds of search, analytics, and reporting," he said.

"More automation is always great," Linden said, pointing to Google's

Froogle search engine as an early example of Semantic Web technology. The Semantic Web will be "a great improvement in user experience," he said.

"I think there's a chance actually that we can do better this time around," said Berners-Lee during a W3C panel discussion about the Semantic Web.

Middle Class Goes Broadband As Price Falls

Middle- and working-class Americans signed up for high-speed Internet access in record numbers in the past year, apparently lured by a price war among phone companies.

Broadband adoption increased 59 percent from March last year to March 2006 among U.S. households with incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000, according to a survey to be released Monday by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

It increased 40 percent in households making less than \$30,000 a year. Among blacks, it increased 121 percent, according to the study.

Middle- and lower-income households still lag higher-income households when it comes to broadband adoption. Among the \$30,000-\$50,000 households, 43 percent now have broadband, compared to 68 percent for those making more than \$75,000.

Overall, 42 percent of adult Americans, or 84 million people, have broadband, compared to 30 percent a year ago.

Phone companies last year started slashing prices for broadband service that uses regular phone line to establish a digital subscriber line, or DSL. Both Verizon Communications Inc. and AT&T Inc. introduced \$14.99 per month offers.

"It seems like the aggressive pricing strategies have had some effect for DSL providers in those middle-income segments," said John Horrigan, associate director for research at Pew.

The average monthly fee for DSL was \$32 in December, compared to \$41 for cable. A year and a half earlier, DSL cost almost as much as cable.

A separate survey by Leichtman Research said DSL has now overtaken cable modems in popularity among middle-income households, though cable modems still make up the majority of home broadband connections overall, at 52 percent. Principal analyst Bruce Leichtman said that figure probably underreported cable modems slightly.

Leichtman said that while DSL is making strides, cable is also adding customers quickly. "The fact is they're both winning. From a profitability standpoint, cable is winning a lot better."

Broadband connections make it much easier for users to put their own content on the Internet, whether it's pictures, blog postings or pages on networking sites like MySpace.

Surprisingly, the Pew survey indicated that households making less than \$50,000 a year are slightly more likely to contribute to Internet content. This is a big change from 2002, the first time a Pew survey asked about

user-generated content. Then, "a 'broadband elite' of mostly male technophiles were responsible for most of this activity," Horrigan wrote.

Pew surveyed 4,001 adults by phone between Feb. 15 and April 6. The survey had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Leichtman Research surveyed 1,600 households by phone in March. The margin of error was plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

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